



Module 5

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

An Introduction to Teaching Traumatised Children



THE COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

General Education Modules
for Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Teachers
of Science, Technology and Mathematics by Distance
in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Developed by

The Southern African Development Community

Ministries of Education in:

- Botswana
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

In partnership with The Commonwealth of Learning

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GENERAL EDUCATION MODULES

This module is one of a series prepared under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and The Commonwealth of Learning as part of the Science, Technology and Mathematics Programme (STAMP 2000+). These General Education modules enable teachers to enhance their professional skills through distance and open learning. Many individuals and groups have been involved in writing and producing these modules. We trust that they will benefit not only the teachers who use them, but also, ultimately, their students and the communities and nations in which they live.

The eighteen General Education modules are as follows:

- Module 1: *Multigrade Teaching: Introduction to Multigrade Teaching*
- Module 2: *Multigrade Teaching: Classroom Organisation and Management*
- Module 3: *The Reading Process*
- Module 4: *Developing Reading Skills*
- Module 5: *Special Educational Needs: An Introduction to Teaching Traumatised Children*
- Module 6: *Special Educational Needs: A Practical Guide to Teaching Traumatised Children*
- Module 7: *Education Management Development: Part A*
- Module 8: *Education Management Development: Part B*
- Module 9: *Child Development*
- Module 10: *Concepts of Learning*
- Module 11: *An Introduction to Concepts in Language and Communication*
- Module 12: *Language and Communication: Language in Use*
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- Module 14: *Curriculum Practice*
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- Module 16: *Effects of Social Changes on Education*
- Module 17: *Comparative Education: Introduction to Key Concepts in Comparative Education*
- Module 18: *Comparative Education: Themes and Trends in Comparative Education in SADC Countries*

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING



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Module 5

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

**An Introduction to Teaching
Traumatised Children**

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SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

An Introduction to Teaching Traumatised Children

This is one of a series of modules in the General Education courses developed by Ministries of Education in the SADC region in cooperation with the Commonwealth of Learning.

Modules 5 and 6 have been designed to help you assist children who are victims of sexual abuse, violence, war and crime to cope with their traumas.

While Module 5 is an introduction to working with children who have special educational needs and mainly focuses on teaching techniques, Module 6 provides practical tips that you can employ to help traumatised children. We hope that after studying this module, you as a teacher will be in a better position to understand how to identify and address the needs of these traumatised children.

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LEARNING TIPS

You will find the following tips helpful as you study this module.

- **Set aside some time each day to work on this module.** If possible, study at the same time and in the same place so you are comfortable with your study surroundings. Learning at a distance requires discipline and motivation.
- **Go through the module unit by unit.**
- **Note any words you do not understand.** Look them up in a dictionary or other reference source or discuss them with your colleagues.
- **Underline or highlight important passages.** Make summary notes in the margins of long passages. Writing will help you to remember the material. You may also choose to make diagrams that illustrate how different ideas are related or list the steps in a procedure or technique.
- As you work through this module, **keep in mind your learners and their educational needs** as well as your instructional goals and your subject matter. How will you apply what you are learning?
- Read the assignment instructions carefully. Then, **do all the self-assessment activities** before proceeding to the Suggested Answers section.
- **As you undertake each activity, relate it to the practice of teaching** and analyse how it will help you to enhance the teaching-learning situation. Always ask yourself how you could use this material.
- **Apply some of the suggested techniques to your teaching.** All suggestions may not be appropriate for your situation, but how will you know unless you try them? Keep a record of what techniques work and an explanation of why some techniques appeared to fail. What does not work now may work later with different students.
- It may be difficult, but try to **meet occasionally with other teachers** to discuss the content and application of suggestions provided in this module.
- If you experience difficulty in understanding some aspect of the module, do not despair! You are meant to be challenged. **Do not give up!** Just remember that your goal is to be the best teacher that you can be. Think of what you would tell a student who was experiencing difficulty in your classroom. Then, apply the same advice to yourself.

ICONS

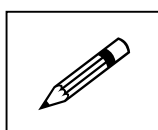
Throughout each module, you will find the following icons or graphic symbols that alert you to a change in activity within the module. Only the icons that are required are used in each module.



Text or Reading Material: provides information about the topics that are covered in a module. The subject matter for each SADC module is organised into units.



Introductory Activity: requires you to focus on the content that will be discussed in a unit.



Self-Assessment: enables you to check your understanding of what you have read and, in some cases, to apply the information presented in the unit to new situations.



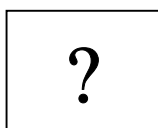
Practice Activity: encourages you to review and apply what you have learned before taking a unit test.



Reflection: asks you to relate what you have learned to your work as a teacher or education officer in your community.



Summary: highlights or provides an overview of the most important points covered in a unit.



Unit Test: concludes each unit.



Suggested Answers: allow you to evaluate your learning by providing sample answers to assessments, activities and the unit test.

UNIT 1: The Concept of Special Educational Needs



Introduction

Our schools have different categories of learners, including children with special educational needs (SEN). The aim of this unit is to introduce you to the concept of SEN with reference to children who have mental and physical disabilities and those who are victims of sexual abuse, violence, war and crime. Children with intellectual, physical and emotional problems often have problems learning and adjusting to the classroom environment. Teachers require special skills to work with these children. This unit explores the definition, importance and categories of special educational needs.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define the concept of Special Educational Needs (SEN).
2. Explain why it is important to identify children with SEN.
3. Identify the different categories of children with SEN.

Definition of Special Educational Needs

The concept of special educational needs (SEN) has been defined differently by different scholars. For instance, in the 1992 Education Act of Britain, a child was defined as having special educational needs if the child had a learning difficulty that called for special educational provisions to be made. Landy and Gains (1996) define a child with special educational needs as a child who has significantly more difficulty in learning than most of the children of the same age. This could refer to children whose disability prevents or hinders them from making use of the learning environment. These difficulties could arise from physical, intellectual, emotional and sensory factors.

What is common among the various definitions of children with special educational needs is the recognition that some pupils have disabilities that make it difficult for them to benefit from curricular activities. In your own community, you may be aware of a number of children who have special educational needs. Goll and Moses, as quoted by Montgomery (1990), indicate that 7.7 % of

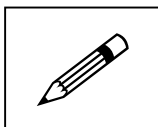
pupils have special educational needs that are associated with behavioural difficulties.

Why Is There Concern about Children with Special Educational Needs?

From your experience, have you noticed that children with special educational needs have been neglected for a long time by their families, by the community and by learning institutions? In some communities, these children are not given the opportunity to attend school because of the stigma attached to their disability. There may be cultural, social and/or religious reasons why the communities do not accept these children. Even in instances where they are given such an opportunity, the schools may provide little or no specialised support. Therefore, they remain disadvantaged members of their communities.

As a teacher, it is important for you to note that, given the opportunity and support, these children are frequently just as capable as their counterparts. Furthermore, every child has a right to an education. It is therefore essential that schools provide a supportive and caring environment that will enable these children to:

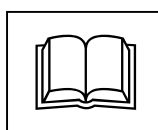
- maximise their individual potential,
- gain self-respect and confidence,
- develop high expectations for themselves, and
- become responsible citizens who can make independent decisions about their own lives.



Self-Assessment 1

1. List three reasons why there is concern about children with special educational needs.
2. What percentage of students in your community have special educational needs? Is this similar to the percentage noted by Goll and Moses?
3. Are these students supported at school and in the community?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Categories of Children with Special Educational Needs

You may have observed that there are a great number of children with special educational needs in your community. These children can be categorized as follows:

- mentally retarded
- autistic

- hearing impaired
- visually handicapped
- physically handicapped
- victims of war, crime and violence
- victims of sexual abuse.

Definition of Terms

You may have children with special educational needs in your school. Therefore, you need to understand the terms that may be used to describe them. The terms used will be briefly elaborated in the next paragraphs.

Mental retardation refers to a state of incomplete mental development such that the individual is incapable of adapting to the normal environment. Evidence of mental retardation can usually be detected at an early age.

Autism is a developmental disability that affects communication and social interaction. The problem is generally evident before the age of three and adversely affects educational performance.

Physical handicaps such as the loss of a limb can cause difficulty in movement or difficulty in retaining information. Children suffering from such physical trauma may learn more slowly or retain information for a shorter time than other children. This disability is clearly recognised because in most cases there are outward signs, such as a missing arm.

Hearing impairments may cause children to have speech problems, limited vocabulary, poor comprehension of language and poor listening skills.

Visual problems range from mild impairments to total blindness. A child might be able to see an object at one distance but not another. Visually impaired children also experience delay in other areas of development. According to Wilson (1998), the delay could be mainly due to the fact that the child cannot see what is available for exploration and manipulation. These children may not have a visual memory that can help them to feel safe in their environment.

While there are various categories of children with special educational needs, this module focuses on children who are the victims of war, crime, violence and sexual abuse.

The term **sexual abuse** has different meanings and interpretations. In the context of this module, it refers to sexual intercourse between an adult and a minor. When

such an act takes place, the child may be harmed mentally, physically and emotionally.

You may have noticed an increase in the number of children who have been sexually abused. This applies to both boys and girls in our society. Hence, a growing percentage of children have special educational needs. Your community may also include children who are victims of war, violence, crime and family break-ups. They also experience severe emotional, physical and mental distress.



Self-Assessment 2

1. Identify various categories of children with special educational needs.
2. Based on your experience as a teacher, what characteristics would you look for when identifying children with learning impairments?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Practice Activity

1. What would you consider to be the benefits of providing a supportive and caring environment to children with special educational needs?
2. Although this was not explicitly covered in this unit, outline the strategies you would use to support children with special educational needs.



Summary

This unit has introduced you to a number of topics related to children with special educational needs. The topics include the definition of children with special educational needs, reasons to be especially concerned about these children and categories of children with special educational needs. We hope that as you continue with your teaching profession, you will always remember to identify these groups of children and provide them with the support they deserve so that they can gain self-respect and confidence and contribute to their communities.



Reflection

Which categories of children with special educational needs have been in your class? Did you take the time to help them? How did you help them? How might you improve the way you respond to such children in the future?



Unit Test

1. Define the concept of special educational needs.
2. Why should teachers be able to identify children with special educational needs?
3. List and briefly describe four categories of children with special educational needs.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

Please note that the answers to this activity will vary, as two of the answers depend upon your observation of your community.

1. There is a concern about children with special educational needs for the following reasons:
 - These children have not been given adequate support by the community.
 - They have not been given the opportunity to study like 'normal' children.
 - They are frequently not considered to be as good as other children and, therefore, they may be neglected by their parents, their community and the education system.
2. The percentage of students with special educational needs will vary from one community to the next. Those communities near war zones may have a higher percentage of children with physical disabilities than other areas.
3. Some communities establish special schools for those with disabilities. Others do not.

Self-Assessment 2

1. In identifying the categories of children with special educational needs, you may have listed children who are:
 - physically handicapped
 - mentally retarded
 - autistic
 - visually handicapped
 - hearing impaired
 - victims of war, crime and violence
 - victims of sexual abuse.
2. You may have listed the following characteristics of children with learning impairments:
 - poor listening skills
 - poor comprehension of language
 - limited vocabulary
 - emotional distress
 - loss of trust

- changes in school behaviour
- high level of fear and hallucinations
- disregard of norms and societal values
- rough and intolerant behaviour towards other children.

Additional answers are possible.

Practice Activity

1. A supportive and caring environment can enable children to:
 - maximise their individual potential,
 - gain self-respect and confidence,
 - develop higher expectations for themselves, and
 - become responsible people who can make independent decisions.
2. As a teacher, you may consider using the following strategies to support children with special educational needs:
 - Encourage children to show their ability to work with others by giving them a chance to interact during group work and including them in all class activities.
 - Give the children responsibilities.
 - Modify their behaviour through praise.
 - Include them in decision-making activities.

Unit Test

1. Children with special educational needs have disabilities that make it difficult for them to benefit from curricular or learning activities. These children may have difficulties that are a result of physical, intellectual, emotional and sensory factors.
2. If you, as a teacher, can identify these students, you will be able to provide opportunities and support that will help them achieve their full potential. Frequently, these children are just as capable as other children in your class. However, they may need extra care and attention.
3. Your answer may include the following categories of children with special educational needs:
 - Mentally retarded individuals are those who have incomplete mental development.

- Physically handicapped students may have impairments that affect their movement or ability to retain information.
- Hearing impaired children may have speech problems, limited vocabulary, poor comprehension of language and poor listening skills.
- Visually impaired individuals may experience difficulty in seeing and may have limited visual memory.
- Sexually abused children may have had a sexual encounter with an adult that caused mental, physical and emotional harm.

You may have also listed children who are autistic or victims of war, crime and violence.

UNIT 2: Children Who Are Victims of Sexual Abuse, War, Crime and Violence



Introduction

In Unit 1, we discussed why you as a teacher should be concerned about children with special educational needs. We also described some of the different categories of such children. This unit looks specifically at children who have been sexually abused and those who are victims of war, crime and violence. We hope that your understanding of the characteristics of these children will help you address their needs while they are in your school.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Identify children who have been sexually abused.
2. Identify children who are victims of war, crime and violence.
3. Describe the characteristics of children who have been sexually abused.
4. Describe the characteristics of children who are victims of circumstances such as war, crime and violence.

Victims of Sexual Abuse

As a teacher, you may be aware of children who have suffered in one way or another. One such category of children in your community would be those who have been sexually abused. These children are usually raped or coerced into engaging in sexual intercourse against their will. Others may be enticed with money and other forms of material wealth. Many of these children may be made to engage in such sexual activities as watching pornography and engaging in oral sex. These children participate involuntarily in these types of anti-social behaviours. Tragically, it is frequently their own parents, relatives, teachers and other members of the community who abuse them. In some cases of sexual abuse, children have been given drugs so that they cannot resist such practices. When they become aware of what has happened to them, they may be threatened with bodily harm or non-support by their parents.

Victims of War

You may be teaching in a community that includes children who are victims of war. Children may be traumatized by war in different ways. They may have:

- participated in wars as combatants,
- witnessed mutilated human bodies,
- been forced to collect dead human bodies, and
- been exposed to pools of human blood.

In the process, these children have endured physical, mental and emotional abuse. Many of them may also have suffered:

- physical deformity such as the loss of limbs and other parts of the body,
- loss of memory,
- loss of parents and relatives and, therefore, loss of parental care, and
- emotional distress as a result of witnessing killings as well as being forced to partake in such activities.

Victims of Crime and Violence

In your community, you may have encountered children who are victims of crime and violence. These are children who, because of economic hardships in their families, may have resorted to crime for survival. Their anti-social behaviour could further be attributed to:

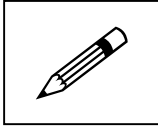
- negligence of parents,
- parental involvement in criminal activities, and
- encouragement by parents and other adults in the community.

It is important to note that law enforcement officers will, from time to time, apprehend such children. If they are not dealt with in an appropriate manner, these children might develop into hard-core criminals.

In your community, you may be aware of parents who have become bad examples for their children. The parents may frequently display violent behaviour. This violence could come in different forms, including:

- the physical abuse of a wife by her husband in the presence of children, and
- the physical abuse of a child by that child's parents or relatives.

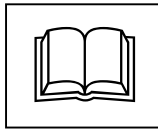
Such acts of violence can traumatise the children so that they become violent themselves. Children living in such an environment will obviously show signs of serious emotional distress at school. As a teacher, you should identify children who are at risk and find ways and means to help them.



Self-Assessment 1

1. List at least three ways that children may be persuaded or forced to engage in sexual activities.
2. Have children in your community been affected by war? If the answer is no, think of situations of war you have seen or heard about. Describe how war has affected the children in those situations.
3. Why would children become involved in crime and violence?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Characteristics of Children Who Are Victims of Sexual Abuse

It is important for a teacher always to be conscious of the characteristics of children with special educational needs, including victims of sexual abuse. These characteristics may vary depending on the nature and extent to which the child has been sexually abused. Such characteristics may include:

- emotional distress,
- lack of confidence,
- loss of appetite,
- change in school behaviour,
- loss of trust,
- anxiety,
- truancy,
- chronic pelvic pains and other physical pains, and
- lack of concentration.

It is important for a teacher to understand that these characteristics can be either short- or long-term. This will depend on the gravity of the harm inflicted on the child, as well as the nature of assistance given after the damage has been done.

Characteristics of Children Who Are Victims of War

You may be aware that many of the characteristics of victims of war are similar to those of individuals who have been sexually abused. It is, however, important to note that some victims of war, such as the ex-combatants, may have some unique characteristics based on their experience. These characteristics may include:

- fear, hallucinations (visions) and bad dreams caused by experiencing the sounds of war weapons, seeing mutilated bodies and pools of human blood and being forced to collect dead bodies;

- physical disabilities such as the loss of limbs and other parts of the body;
- hard-heartedness;
- disregard for the norms and values of society as a result of exposure to violent environments;
- rough, intolerant or unacceptable behaviour towards other children; and
- truancy.

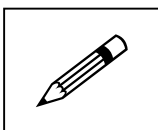
These children will also need your support and counselling if they are to become a part of normal society.

Characteristics of Children Who Are Victims of Crime and Violence

In your community, there will always be children who, for different reasons, are victims of crime or violence. These children, like those who are victims of sexual abuse and war, display certain characteristics typical of the type of activities they engage in. Some examples of such characteristics are:

- violence,
- truancy,
- emotional distress,
- low academic performance,
- lack of concentration,
- restlessness, and
- dozing (feeling sleepy) in class.

It is imperative that you make an effort to trace the family background of these children. A visit to their homes to discuss their problems with parents will help you in your attempt to assist the victims.



Self-Assessment 2

1. From your experience as a teacher, which characteristics of sexually abused children would you consider as having major adverse effects on their ability to learn?
2. From your experience as a teacher, describe the forms of behaviour shown by children who are victims of war.
3. You may have come in contact with children who are victims of crime and violence. What characteristics do they usually display?

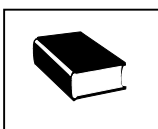
Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Practice Activity

Suppose you are a teacher in school 'A', and you work with children who are victims of sexual abuse. There is another teacher in school 'B' who has started work with such children. In one paragraph, explain how you can help this teacher identify a sexually abused child among the other learners.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



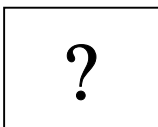
Summary

This unit has introduced you to children who have been abused or who have suffered in different ways. Some have suffered sexual abuse and others are victims of such circumstances as war, crime and violence. The unit has provided you with information on the characteristics of these victims. We hope that, as you continue to teach, you will take time to identify these children and address their needs.



Reflection

Think about your role as a teacher of children who have been abused. How could you help these children?



Unit Test

Explain how you would identify children who are victims of sexual abuse, war, crime and violence.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

1. There could be many ways children could be forced or persuaded to take part in sex-related activities, but a few that seem to be common in our communities include:
 - threatening to harm children if they report the abuse,
 - enticing them, for example, with money and other forms of material wealth,
 - in the case of parents, threatening not to support their children, and,
 - giving them drugs.
2. Children who have been affected by war may have:
 - physical deformities,
 - poor memories,
 - no parental care due to the deaths of parents and other family members, and
 - emotional distress as a result of witnessing killings or being forced to participate in violent activities.
3. Children may become involved in crime due to:
 - economic hardships in their families,
 - involvement of their parents in criminal activities,
 - encouragement by parents to engage in criminal activities,
 - involvement in drug abuse,
 - a culture of violence in the family, or
 - copying their parents' violent behaviour.

Self-Assessment 2

1. The answer to this question will vary according to your situation. However, any of the following characteristics could have had a major adverse effect on learning:
 - emotional distress,
 - lack of confidence,
 - anxiety, and
 - lack of concentration.
2. There could be several forms of behaviour shown by children who are victims of war. However, the following could be cited as good examples:

- fear and hallucinations or bad dreams about war,
 - hard-heartedness and disregard for the norms and values of the society as a result of exposure to violent environments,
 - rough and intolerant behaviour towards other children, and
 - missing classes.
3. Your experience as a teacher may have revealed to you the different characteristics displayed by children who are victims of crime and violence. These include:
- violence,
 - truancy,
 - emotional distress,
 - low academic performance,
 - lack of concentration,
 - restlessness, and
 - dozing (feeling sleepy) in class.

Practice Activity

As a teacher, you will from time to time have children with special needs in your classroom. These children may include those who have been sexually abused. You may already be aware of several things you might wish to suggest to help another teacher to identify the needs of sexually abused children. However, the following are good examples of characteristics that would help to identify these victims:

- emotional distress,
- lack of confidence,
- anxiety,
- lack of concentration, and
- signs of physical pain.

Unit Test

The characteristics of victimized children will differ from one child to another, depending on the nature of the abuse inflicted. In some cases, they will be similar in many respects. As a teacher, you will observe abnormal behaviours such as:

- emotional distress,
- signs of fear,
- lack of confidence,
- lack of concentration, and
- anxiety.

UNIT 3: Problems Faced in Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Traumatised Children



Introduction

In Unit 2, you explored the characteristics of children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime. Unit 3 discusses the problems that you may face in identifying traumatised children. These problems will be dealt with under headings such as cultural issues, religious beliefs and social barriers surrounding these victims.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. State cultural barriers to the identification of children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime.
2. Analyse the social and religious problems that can be encountered when identifying children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime.
3. Explain some strategies that can be used to address the needs of these traumatised children.

Cultural Issues

Think of the children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime in your area. Can you think of the problems that you might encounter when trying to identify such children?

Different societies have different beliefs, norms and values that can create problems for you when identifying these traumatised children. The beliefs are attached to taboos, stigma and attitudes that are associated with cultural practices.

In some cultures, some types of behaviour are supposed to be hidden. For example, a woman may be expected to behave in a certain manner that is acceptable to society. This would influence a young girl who is a victim of violence and sexual abuse to pretend to be living a normal life. The parents of such a child would also deny that any abuse had occurred.

Some cultures believe that children have no right to speak up against elders and that they do not have any say in their lives. In such cases, adults could take advantage of children by sexually abusing them or by marrying them at a tender age. A child would not be in a position to say anything about any experience that would amount to abuse because it would seem

to be normal practice. The child would not speak up, as her action would be seen as being disrespectful of the adult. If she complained, she would be seen as not following acceptable cultural norms.

Social Barriers

From your experience, you may have realised that some causes of child abuse are the result of economic hardships, family break-ups and instability within our families, societies and nations. Some societies have frequent incidences of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime. Because of the frequency of such events, children may view them as normal practices. Therefore, children might feel it is useless to seek help or report any such cases. Even if anyone thought of taking action against the offenders, they would fear for their lives and those of their families.

Some traumatised children may not be free to communicate their problems because of the stigma and fear attached to these circumstances. Those who come from poor families might engage in sex or crime in return for money. The children in this situation might hide the truth because they fear being beaten, arrested, or removed from their homes.

Children in broken or violent families might hide their feelings to protect their abusive parents. These children would think that if they revealed the situation, they would not be accepted in the family or society.

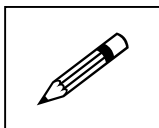
As a teacher who is trying to identify traumatised children, you might also encounter problems. The members of the community in which you teach might think that you do not value their cultural norms. They may not want to speak with you and, if they do, their statements might be untruthful.

Similarly, victims of war may not want to reveal their problems because they may feel that society has betrayed their trust.

Religious Barriers

Religious barriers can also prevent the identification of children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime. Some religious groups think of disabilities as being mishaps that the victims deserve. Sexually abused children might be made to believe that they sinned and have been victimised as a result of their sins. This might leave them in fear that God will punish them further if they reveal what happened. Feelings of guilt also affect parents, who might feel that the children are being punished because of some act of bad behaviour. In some religions, children might be told that discussing sexual abuse would make people realise that they are engaged in sexual practices and that, because of this behaviour, the children

would not be allowed in church. As a result, the children and parents might deny the incident ever happened to them.



Self-Assessment I

What social and cultural problems do you think would be barriers in identifying victimized children?

Possible answers to this activity are at the end of this unit.



Addressing the Needs of Traumatized Children

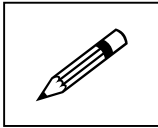
The emotions and the behaviour of children who have been abused can be observed both within and outside of the classroom. This section will help you understand strategies that you can employ to support these children. As a teacher, you need to give yourself time to observe the behaviour and academic performance of the children. You can do this through keeping records of their performance and behaviour. To make the records effective, both the teacher and children should be involved. The learners' performance and behaviour should be observed and discussed with them daily or weekly.

This procedure would help children to understand and trust you and therefore have confidence in you. If the learners have confidence in you, they are more likely to become open to discussion. Because these children may have academic problems, they need you to work closely with them in order to help them cope with the school curriculum. As they work with you, they will acquire self-esteem and confidence.

Another way to help these children is to develop their interpersonal skills of tolerance, cooperation, friendship and respect for others (Tilstone, 1991). You should not act as if you dismiss their cultural, societal and religious beliefs. However, show children that, while they respect their cultures, they should also respect themselves. Reassure them that the terrible things that have happened to them are not their fault. By always treating them with kindness and respect, try to show them that abuse is not normal or inevitable. Tell all your students that violent behaviour is not acceptable in your classroom.

As a teacher, you should not forget that the parents of these children could also help in addressing the needs of their sons and daughters. Therefore, it is vital to talk to parents about their children. Let parents see you as someone who can help, rather than as a threat to their cultural and religious beliefs and norms. Make parents feel comfortable around you and encourage them to contribute ideas about how to help their children. As in the case with your students, this action on your part should help parents develop confidence in you.

If the parents are abusing their children, you should tell the parents that you are aware of their behaviour and explain how it is affecting their children. It may also be helpful to inform social workers and the police as well as religious and community leaders who may provide assistance that is not readily available to you. However, you must always determine what effect your actions will have on the children. You want to help them; you do not want them to receive further abuse.



Self-Assessment 2

1. In your school community, you have worked with children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime. Some teachers in your school are interested in your work. If they decide to work with similar children, list some of the barriers that might prevent them from identifying such children.
2. From your experience as a teacher, how would you help traumatised children cope with religious, cultural and social barriers?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Practice Activity

Let us suppose you have just moved into an area where there is a lot of crime, violence and sexual abuse. Many of the children you teach are victims of these conditions. Briefly explain the steps that you would take to identify and help these children.

Possible answers to this activity are at the end of this unit.



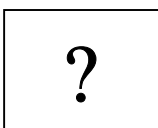
Reflection

Have you encountered any of the cultural, social and religious barriers outlined in this unit? If so, how did you address them?



Summary

You might have observed that all the aspects of this unit are surrounded by fear, stigma and the attitudes and beliefs of the various people involved. In most cases, traumatised children will be reluctant to accept your assistance because they fear being victimised, laughed at or rejected by their communities. This unit has explored the cultural, social and religious beliefs that can hinder the process of identifying problems of children who are victims of sexual abuse, violence, war and crime.



Unit Test

Outline strategies that you would employ to address the needs of traumatized children.

Possible answers to this test are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

There could be many answers to this self-assessment activity, but possible answers may contain the following responses:

- As would be expected in some cultures, children may hide their true feelings.
- Parents may deny that anything unusual has happened to their children.
- Children may not reveal abuse for fear of disrespecting adults and going against cultural norms.
- Children may not take action for fear of exposing themselves to the stigma attached to having been victimised.

Self-Assessment 2

1. Your experience might provide you with several answers to this question. However, the following may be considered:
 - social barriers
 - religious barriers
 - cultural barriers.
2. You should note that there is no single answer to this question. You may want to consider the following:
 - Give yourself enough time to observe the children's behaviour and academic performance.
 - Keep records of behaviour and academic records.
 - Develop a partnership with learners.
 - Keep a flow of communication between yourself and the learners.
 - Show appreciation and acceptance of cultural and social norms.
 - Encourage children to communicate their problems to someone in order to be assisted.
 - Reassure children that it is not their fault that they have been abused.

Practice Activity

Your answer to this activity should be similar to the answer for Question 2 in Self-Assessment 2.

Unit Test

There are many strategies that one can employ to address the needs of traumatized children. Below are some strategies that you can try. You may also have acquired additional strategies through your experience as a teacher.

- Use good communication skills in contacts with parents of these children. Note that parents can also help you address the problems.
- Develop the learners' interpersonal skills of tolerance, cooperation and respect for themselves and others.
- Work closely with the children to give them support in the class and in extracurricular activities.
- Get the children involved in a lot of activities to help them feel useful and responsible.
- Equip them with problem-solving skills.

UNIT 4: Skills Required in Working with Traumatised Children



Introduction

Before you read this unit, it may be helpful if you recall some of the topics presented in the previous unit. Unit 3 dealt with the problems faced in identifying traumatised children and how you could address their needs. In Unit 3, you learned about cultural, social and religious barriers that could make it more difficult for you to identify and help these children.

This unit introduces you to some important professional skills needed by teachers of children with special educational needs:

- counselling skills;
- observation skills;
- class management skills; and
- strategies for helping children who are victims of sexual abuse, violence, war and crime.

Your major role as a teacher is to facilitate learning, including the learning of children with special educational needs. Counselling and support from you are very important to these children.

First, you must clearly understand what the term ‘counselling’ means. When dealing with the sexually abused and the victims of war and crime, counselling plays a crucial role.

This unit introduces you to skills that deserve more attention. We hope that this unit will be of great benefit to you in assisting children with special educational needs.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define counselling.
2. Discuss some counselling skills.
3. Use some counselling skills in solving problems.
4. Use observation skills in counselling traumatised children.
5. Use group work in managing classrooms where there are traumatised children.
6. Design strategies for helping children who are victims of sexual abuse, violence, war and crime.

Definition of Counselling

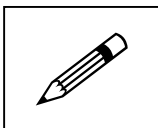
As a teacher, you can appreciate that children with special needs require counselling. Scholars have defined counselling in different ways. Byrne (1963: 61) defines **counselling** as “a service of verbal assistance by one person who wishes to help someone in a troubled state by influencing his/her behaviour so as to relieve the troubled state.”

Collins (1986) reports that not many activities in school are voluntary for either the teacher or the student. In counselling, you must create an atmosphere in which children, especially those with special educational needs, feel free to come to you for help. As counselling is concerned with growth and change in the clients, you must aim to help bring about change within the children. If there are some children in your class who are victims of war and crime or who have been sexually abused, encourage these children to come to you. In so doing, you are empowering them to get help from you.

Counselling Skills

Throughout your work with children in your class, you must show empathetic understanding. Bernard (1998) defines **empathy** as the ability to enter the perceptual world of another person. In other words, for you to care for the children, you must understand their world as though you were inside it. You must be able to see a child’s problem through the child’s eyes. When you use empathetic skills to help the child find answers to the problem, the child begins to have confidence in you. Once there is trust between you and the child, there is a likelihood that the child will confide in you or tell you things that he or she would not tell anyone else.

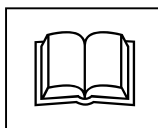
Confidentiality, being able to keep secrets, is very important. You must keep secrets or you will lose the trust of the children. You have to bear in mind that you are the most crucial person in obtaining information that is likely to be of great benefit to other teachers and determining how it can be communicated. However, Lacey and Lomas (1997) agree that confidentiality need not be maintained if withholding information prejudices the welfare of the child. In other words, you should never reveal something that a child tells you in confidence unless doing so will help the child.



Self-Assessment 1

What two qualities should you possess in order to apply good counselling skills to help children with special educational needs?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.

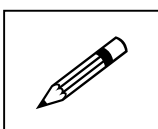


Observation Skills

If you want to be an effective counsellor, you cannot be a judge. If you want to be a good counsellor, you must be non-judgemental. Fontana (1988) points out that praise or approval can be subtle forms of judgement that can prevent a student from revealing positive or negative feelings. It is crucial for you as the teacher not to look down upon these traumatised children, as this would demoralise them. A good counsellor makes observations. If any judgement is required, it should come from the child.

Class Management Skills

You can also make use of group work. Bennet, as quoted by Tilstone (1991), argues that recent research in primary education stresses the importance of pupils working in groups. The organisation of group work with traumatised children is demanding and requires some careful planning. Traumatised students need to work with a partner, and they need a great deal of encouragement if they have to interact. Group work will be discussed in the next module.



Self-Assessment 2

How would you counsel a child in your class who has been traumatised?

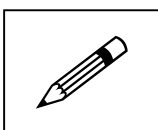
Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.



Strategies for Helping Sexually Abused Children

As a counsellor, you must possess a number of skills in order to address the problems of sexually abused children. Try to help them by adopting some of the following strategies:

- Listen to the child's story.
- Show that you care; demonstrate empathy.
- Seek medical help.
- Determine where and when the incident occurred.
- Report cases to the police.
- Encourage the child to talk to you about the problem.
- Advise the child to avoid discussing secrets with strangers unless the child is accompanied by someone he or she trusts.



Self-Assessment 3

From your experience as a teacher, what measures could you take to help a sexually abused child in your school?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Practice Activity

Imagine that you have received into your school a pupil who has suffered sexual abuse. What counselling skills would you employ to help the child?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



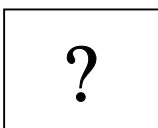
Summary

This unit has introduced you to a number of very important issues and concepts and some of the skills teachers need to help children who have been sexually abused or victimised by violence, war and crime. You learned about counselling skills, including observation and class management skills. This unit has equipped you with very basic counselling skills and strategies. We hope that, as you use your counselling skills, you will remember that your goal is to assist children so they can be better learners.



Reflection

Reflect on the counselling skills that you have employed in the past to assist children with special educational needs. Think of how you would employ the skills gained from this unit.



Unit Test

Outline the counselling techniques you would employ to counsel children in your school.

Possible answers to this test are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

The two qualities mentioned in Unit 4 were empathetic skills and confidentiality.

Self-Assessment 2

Please note that the answer to this activity will depend on your experience in counselling. You might have included the following items in your answer:

- Gain confidence.
- Listen to the story.
- Ask them how they feel about what happened to them.
- Ask them what they are going to do about it.
- Ask them what kind of support they would like to receive.

Self-Assessment 3

There is no single right answer to this activity. However, you may wish to consider some of the following:

- Listen to the child's story.
- Show that you care.
- Seek medical help.
- Determine where and when the incident occurred.
- Report such cases to the police.
- Encourage the child to talk to you about the problem.
- Advise the child to avoid discussing secrets with strangers unless the child is accompanied by someone he or she trusts.

Practice Activity

The counselling skills that may be employed include non-judgmental behaviour and empathy.

Unit Test

You may consider the following points for your answer:

- Meet with students in a one-to-one situation, gain their confidence, let them tell their stories and ask them about the kind of help they would like to receive.
- Place them in a group of other students who may provide support and encouragement.
- Make sure that students with special needs feel that someone genuinely cares about them.

UNIT 5: Motivating Traumatised Children



Introduction

Unit 4 focused on some of the skills needed by teachers of children who are victims of sexual abuse, war, crime and violence. In that unit, you learned that you can use observation skills, counselling skills and classroom management to support these children. In Unit 5, you will learn how you can motivate traumatised students.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define the concept of motivation.
2. Explain why motivation is important.
3. Identify factors contributing to high motivation.
4. Describe signs of low motivation.
5. Identify factors that contribute to low motivation.
6. Explain some strategies that can be used to raise motivation.

Definition of Motivation

As a teacher, you may have noted that children look to you for assistance when their morale is low. It is your responsibility to provide encouragement and inspiration to all learners, especially those who are victims of sexual abuse, war, crime and violence. You need to help them overcome their problems and help them succeed with their schoolwork. You will need to employ motivation skills in order to achieve this mammoth task. It is therefore important that you understand the meaning of motivation.

Whitaker (1995: 53, 160) has defined **motivation** as the process of responding to pupils' inner needs and drives. He argues that motivation is the key consideration in schooling. You need to be aware of three components of motivation:

- the need to be satisfied,
- the aspirations to be achieved, and
- self-esteem.

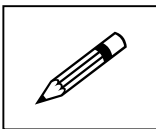
He further points out that the guiding principle in motivating people is to treat them appropriately, in accordance with their perceived needs and aspirations and with a sensitivity to their self-esteem. In other words, as you help people, take into account their needs and wishes. Help them to respect themselves.

Importance of Motivation

In the classroom, you need to motivate children, especially those who have special needs due to victimisation or abuse. There is no doubt that teaching such children is a very difficult task, because you cannot predict how they are going to react. However, you have an obligation to motivate them, regardless of the situation. If you are to make any reasonable progress in motivating these children, you need to address some of the issues outlined below:

- Their individual needs, which will vary from one child to another. Some of the needs will be specific to individual children, while other needs will be common to all of them.
- Their behaviour, which could be a result of the abuse they have suffered.
- Their attitude towards school work, which may be negative.

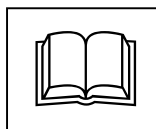
In trying to motivate these children, you should strive to develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect (Whitaker, 1995).



Self-Assessment 1

As a teacher, what are some of the issues you have to address in order to motivate learners who are victims of sexual abuse, war, crime and violence?

Possible answers to this question are provided at the end of this unit.



Factors Contributing to High Motivation

We have already explained why it is important to motivate victimised children. It is important for you to be aware of the factors that may contribute to the motivation of these children. These factors include:

- support and guidance,
- love and appreciation,
- positive reinforcement,
- security, and
- providing appropriate facilities and resources.

As a teacher, you need to nurture in these children a sense of self-esteem and acceptance that they belong to the school and indeed the community.

Signs of Low Motivation

From time to time, children, especially those who are victims of trauma, show signs of low motivation. As a teacher, you should observe the following possible signs of low motivation:

- lack of interest in school activities,
- frequent tardiness or truancy,
- lack of concentration,
- lack of involvement in class activities,
- aggressive behaviour, and
- absent-mindedness.

Factors Contributing to Low Motivation

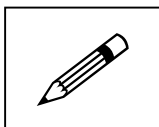
You have an obligation to motivate students, especially those with special educational needs. Therefore, you need to note the factors that may contribute to low motivation in traumatised learners. Once you are aware of these factors, you will be in a better position to help them. These factors may include:

- lack of care by both parents and teachers,
- ridicule by parents, teachers and other children,
- lack of professional support and guidance,
- lack of appropriate facilities and resources, and
- lack of opportunity to be involved in school activities.

Strategies That Can Raise Motivation

You should realize that the children you deal with are different from one another. The extent to which they will react to your efforts to motivate them will differ. It is therefore important to adopt a variety of strategies such as those below:

- Create a relaxed and safe learning environment based on cooperation and mutual trust between the children and you.
- Involve the learners in school activities and decision making.
- Reward and give positive reinforcement for attempts made by the learners in school activities.



Self-Assessment 2

1. Using your experience as a teacher, what do you think are the factors that may motivate traumatised children to succeed in school?
2. You are expected to play a major role in motivating children, in particular those with special educational needs. List some of the factors that can contribute to their low motivation.

3. Suppose you have received into your class a demotivated child who is a victim of violence. What strategies would you use to motivate the child?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



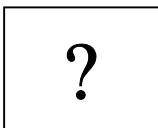
Summary

This unit has given you an insight into what you can do to motivate children, especially those who have been sexually abused or victimised by war, crime and violence. The information covered includes the definition of motivation, the importance of motivation, factors contributing to high motivation, signs of demotivation, factors contributing to low motivation and strategies that can raise motivation. You can use this information to motivate these children so that they will change their attitude, begin to enjoy the school environment and participate in their own learning process.



Reflection

Assess the role you can play in motivating children. Think about how you would go about motivating them, given the information you now have.



Unit Test

1. How does motivation affect learning?
2. If a child appears to have little motivation, how can you encourage the child to be more motivated?
3. Can all learners be motivated? Explain your answer.

Possible answers to test are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

In working with traumatised children, you should also consider the following issues:

- the individual needs of the children, which may be common or vary from one child to another;
- difficult behaviours, which could be attributed to the abuse suffered by children; and
- the children's attitude towards their school work, which may be negative.

Self-Assessment 2

1. Factors contributing to the high motivation of traumatised children may include the following:
 - support and guidance,
 - love and appreciation,
 - positive reinforcement,
 - security, and
 - appropriate facilities and resources.
2. You may have already encouraged children who are demotivated. Some of the factors which might have contributed to such low motivation amongst traumatised children may include:
 - lack of care by both parents and teachers,
 - ridicule by teachers, parents and other children,
 - lack of professional support and guidance,
 - lack of appropriate facilities and resources, and
 - lack of opportunity to be involved in school activities.
3. This unit suggests several strategies that can be used to raise the motivation of a traumatised child:
 - Create a conducive learning environment based on cooperation and mutual trust between all of the children and the teacher.
 - Involve the child in school activities and decision making.
 - Reward and provide positive reinforcement for the child's efforts.

You may be aware of additional strategies.

Unit Test

1. Motivation has a significant effect on learning. Students do better at school when they feel comfortable and secure in their school environment and see that learning can help them help themselves achieve certain rewards or goals.
2. A child who shows signs of low motivation may become more motivated if the teacher:
 - genuinely shows he or she cares,
 - provides support and guidance,
 - shows appreciation,
 - encourages the student to participate in school activities,
 - provides security in a non-threatening environment, and
 - involves the student in decision making.
3. A teacher may not be able to motivate all learners because each learner has different needs and desires. The teacher may not be able to address these needs and desires. However, the teacher should try a variety of ways to motivate students. If the teacher's efforts are unsuccessful, she or he may seek help from the learner's parents or from professionals in the community.

UNIT 6: Needs Assessment of Traumatized Children



Introduction

In Unit 5, you were introduced to the following topics:

- a definition of motivation,
- the importance of motivation,
- factors contributing to high motivation,
- signs of low motivation,
- factors that contribute to low motivation, and
- strategies that can be used to raise motivation.

This unit focuses on the assessment of children with special educational needs. Assessment ensures an improved and sustained quality of education.

There are a variety of assessment techniques. Several are reviewed in this module because these techniques will enable you to improve your students' performance.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Define assessment.
2. Explain why assessment is important.
3. List the various professionals that can be involved in the assessment.
4. Identify some factors that may affect assessment.
5. List some assessment techniques that can be employed when dealing with children with special educational needs.

Definition of Assessment

As an educator, you appreciate that teachers constitute the most important group that assesses children at school. It is therefore of paramount importance that you understand what assessment means. Lewis (1986) defines **class assessment** as the systematic process of gathering educationally relevant information in order to make legal and instructional decisions about the provision of special services. You need to gather information that you can use to help learners. The information must be gathered and used in a professional manner. It must not be discussed with others who are not interested in helping your learners, and it should not be used in any manner that may harm a child.

Importance of Assessment

If you want to be an effective teacher, you need to gather information about your learners that will help you understand them better. You need to know about the problems they face and think about how these problems may affect how they think, act and learn. Then, you will be able to determine the specific nature of instruction that the children need and the extent to which they are progressing. You cannot measure progress unless you know the children's behaviour before and after instruction has taken place. You cannot compare the behaviours of one child to the behaviours of others until you conduct an assessment. Once you have gathered information systematically, you can then make a meaningful and relevant appraisal or evaluation.



Self-Assessment 1

Why is assessment important to a teacher?

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Factors That Affect Assessment

It is vital for you to be fully aware that emotional, social, intellectual or even physical factors have a bearing on the students' behaviour in assessment. It is therefore necessary for a teacher of children with special educational needs to involve a number of professionals in assessment, particularly if a behaviour is not typical of a child or if it becomes persistent. Charlton and David (1993) state that this additional assistance is needed because some dimensions of the situation might be outside the field of your professional competence. You can assess children with special educational needs through interviews with teachers or parents. Charlton and David (1993) agree that no professional can work effectively as 'a one-man team'.

Other professionals who can help you with your assessment include:

- social workers,
- doctors,
- police officers,
- occupational therapists, and
- physiotherapists.

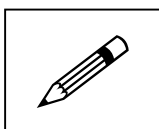
However, the above professionals may not be readily accessible to teachers in rural settings. You might have to work alone.

For you to be effective in your assessment, you must identify your learners' environment and the kind of behaviour that is acceptable in that environment.

Whether you work by yourself or with a small team, you need to identify factors that may affect your assessment. These include the following:

- religious beliefs,
- cultural or social beliefs,
- professional incompetence, and
- absence of information.

Religions and cultural beliefs may affect how your learners behave and what is acceptable for them to talk about. Professionals who should be able to help you conduct the assessments may not have the professional skills they need. They may not be well trained or they may act in an improper manner while they are conducting assessments.



Self-Assessment 2

List the factors that may affect the amount and kind of information you collect when conducting assessments. Based on your experience with your community, provide an example to illustrate each of the factors you list.

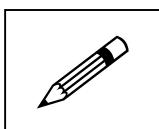
Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Assessment Measures

To address the issue of assessment of children with special educational needs, you have to know the various assessment measures that can be employed:

- observations within various settings,
- interviews with parents, teachers and children,
- checklists which you can use to record the presence or absence of certain behaviours,
- rating scales to rate any difference in a child's performance, and
- school records and reports.



Self-Assessment 3

As a teacher, you are expected to assist in carrying out some assessment techniques with children in your school. Your school head may ask you to identify children in your classroom who are sexually abused, neglected or physically handicapped. Cite some of the most common assessment measures and/or resources that you and your school head would use.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



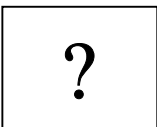
Summary

The unit has described a number of assessment techniques and factors to consider in assessment. The issues covered in the unit include the definition and importance of assessment. Assessment techniques that can be employed with children who have special educational needs have been outlined. The various professionals to be consulted when carrying out your assessments have been identified. You have learned that it is essential to conduct assessments in a professional manner and use the information collected only to help the children in your care.



Reflection

Whom in your community would you ask to help conduct assessments of children with special educational needs? Think of how you would consult with them, given the insights you have gained from this unit.



Unit Test

1. What is the primary reason for conducting assessments?
2. What types of professionals are commonly involved in the assessment of traumatised children?

Possible answers to this test are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

Answers to this activity will depend on your experience as a teacher, but you may wish to consider the information below.

Assessment is important because it enables you to:

- identify the specific problems being encountered by your learners,
- decide how you will instruct your learners,
- determine their progress, and
- evaluate your learners.

Self-Assessment 2

In citing the factors that will affect the amount and quality of assessment information, you may wish to consider the following:

- religious beliefs,
- cultural issues,
- professional incompetence, and
- inadequate information.

The examples you provide will vary, depending on your experience. However, you may have mentioned in your answer how different views about sex and war determine the type of information you can collect.

Self-Assessment 3

You and your school head may have obtained assessment information by:

- reviewing previous school reports,
- speaking to other teachers who may have taught the children who are now in your care,
- observing the learners in school, on the playground or in your community, and
- interviewing the child, the parents and the professionals in your community.

The information gathered could be in the form of:

- written reports,
- rating scales, and
- behaviour checklists.

Unit Test

1. Assessments are conducted so that the teacher can use the information from the assessment to help students learn.
2. Teachers may receive support from professionals such as medical practitioners, social workers and the police.

The teacher may refer traumatised children to medical and social professionals who can help to identify the specific needs of the children concerned. These professionals would then advise teachers on how they could best assist these children. The teacher and other professionals would meet regularly to discuss the needs of traumatised children.

UNIT 7: Support Services



Introduction

Working with children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime is a challenge. You might have wondered whether you could cope with these children's problems as a teacher working alone. This unit suggests sources of support that you can use when assisting children who have experienced these traumas. The topics in this unit include the provision of support services, collaboration, specialized facilities and barriers to the access of support services.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Identify the different types of support services that can be available for children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime.
2. Explain how you can work collaboratively with other professionals to provide services for children who are victims of such traumas.
3. Discuss some barriers that can hinder you or other teachers from accessing support services.

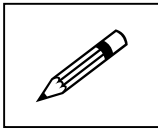
Provision of Support Services

Have you ever felt that you needed support? Think about how children might feel after they have been sexually abused or victimised by war or crime. Some may be living in a violent home or community. If you were in their situation, you would want someone to help you. If you work with children who are victims of such trauma, you may also want to seek help and support.

What would you do to get support? It is difficult, isn't it? Perhaps there are support services in your area that you can find, or perhaps you will need to develop your own support. Different agencies, teams of people and institutions can offer advice and skills that can be used to help traumatised children. You may be able to obtain professional, medical, community, family and school support, ranging from counselling to the provision of facilities and materials that these children can use to cope with their situation or environment.

When considering these services, you should bear in mind that some of them would need *you* to support *them*. You must be willing to contribute some of your ideas, suggestions, skills and time. Therefore, you should have an understanding of how these services work. The following paragraphs will advise you

on what these services may have to offer and who should be part of these support teams. Do not forget to seek out reference materials that you can use to assess and support learners who may have been traumatised.



Self-Assessment 1

Based on the content in this section, explain what the term 'support services' refers to.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



School Support Services

The nearest support to you is your school. The school can provide information about your learners' welfare, behaviour and school work. The children could be observed and you could record changes or progress in behaviour and schoolwork. School support services could also advise learners and teachers on steps that can be taken if the learners' problems persist.

Within the school, there may be professionals who have different skills and are willing to offer a variety of services. These professionals could guide class teachers to ensure that they recognise their responsibilities towards these children. The professionals could try to help teachers to be aware and understand the stigma associated with children who are victims of these traumas. Also, they could help to prevent stressful situations from arising.

Personnel within the school support services have individual strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of these professionals can be used to counsel these children. The professional support groups should meet regularly to discuss and evaluate their working strategies. Peer classroom observation might be adopted to support teachers working with these victims. In other words, other teachers or professionals could observe the classroom management and organisation of the teacher who has traumatised students in his or her class and provide encouragement and feedback.

Out-of-School Support

Previously, it was mentioned that there are other support services, groups or teams in the community who could offer assistance. Some of these services could be private or voluntary, and others could be initiated by the local authority. These groups may include professionals such as medical practitioners, psychotherapists, physiotherapists and social workers.

The professionals mentioned above have different roles in supporting you and the children you are working with.

Children who have persistent problems or who are deeply disturbed can be referred to professionals for help. These professionals can also help reduce tension or stress that you might have experienced while working with children, parents and other teachers of traumatised children.

The professionals would help children examine their fears and confusions and increase their awareness and capacity to regulate or deal with their feelings. Children would also be helped in building self-esteem. Social workers in particular would be of great help to children as they continue to associate with the families. Their work ranges from visiting homes to recommending other services that can help.

Specialised Facilities

As a teacher, you might need to know about the specialised facilities that may be needed or are available in your area. These facilities might be used for counselling purposes or to provide special equipment and books that could help children understand that they are not the only ones facing such traumas. Such facilities could therefore reduce the emotional scars that might have been left by the incidents.

Some facilities may require children to be removed permanently from the classroom and school; others may be used to support children for a short time.

Methods of providing service could be termed 'direct' or 'indirect' services. **Direct services** deal directly with children and include those found in places like hospital wards or resource units that might be some distance from the school. There could also be special schools or units within a school that are used on a full-time or part-time basis (Clark, Dyson and Millward, 1998: 46). **Indirect service** would be provided when the specialist gives advice or information to the teachers, so that they can pass it to the children.

Specialised facilities can also give children training to use their limbs, exercises to improve strength and mobility and equipment to support the children's rehabilitation. As you may be aware, some of these facilities have been provided for use by children who have lost their limbs during wars.



Self-Assessment 2

Outline the support services that can be offered to children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime. Identify which of these supports are available in your community.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



Barriers to Accessing Support Services

You may be aware that any development when introduced for the first time may be received with caution or, worse still, resistance. As a teacher, you might have to face a situation in which the school administration does not support your attempts to help traumatised learners. They may state that by helping these students, you are neglecting other school activities. Some teachers in your school might reject your actions on religious or cultural grounds.

Others might feel that in the process of carrying out your activities, you are interfering with their work. They may feel that you have taken on too many roles that are in conflict. They may believe that the teacher's role is to be carried out only in the classroom.

You might also find it difficult to help victimised children because you do not have adequate background information about them. That is, other teachers, parents and professionals such as doctors and social workers do not provide you with the information you need. When this happens, you should not despair, but take the time to explain to the individuals concerned why it is necessary to give attention and support to these children.

One other barrier could be your lack of skill in handling these children. If you do not understand or are not familiar with the right procedures, you need to obtain specialised information or training.

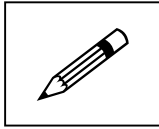
Lack of information about what other services are available can also make it difficult for you to help these children. In some instances, professionals are reluctant to share their expertise. In spite of this negative attitude, you should try to seek their assistance. The welfare of your learners depends on you obtaining the proper help that they require.

Collaboration

Having explored the responsibilities of different professionals who are involved in helping traumatised children, you may have realized that you need to work closely with various support services. It would be advisable for groups or teams to collaborate and share their professional expertise and give each other moral support. Since children act differently and have different needs, different professionals are needed to work together to assist them. An emotionally stressed child will need a psychologist, while the same child might also be physically disabled and need a physician. As a teacher, you might refer children to social workers or physiotherapists, who might counsel parents as well as their children.

Collaboration can be more effective if people working together understand each other's skills, expertise, experiences and

work constraints. There could also be a good working relationship if team members recognise each other's weaknesses and strengths in terms of the support they can provide. Groups need to meet regularly to review their progress and that of the children. Progress records should be maintained and reviewed. Any observations and records must be kept confidential.



Self-Assessment 3

State at least three factors that could prevent you from getting or being given the support you need to help your traumatised learners.

Possible responses for this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



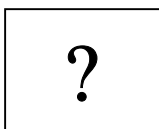
Summary

This unit has introduced you to some of the important ways of working with support groups for children who are victims of violence, sexual abuse, war and crime. You have also been made aware of some factors that can prevent you from accessing or providing support services. This unit outlined information that members of a support group can offer you and your learners.



Reflection

Are you fully aware of the support services available in your community? Have you used them to support you and your learners? How could you work better with the available support personnel to ensure that your students get the help that they need?



Unit Test

1. You have worked with traumatized children. You find it difficult to work on your own, so you want to establish a collaborative group of colleagues at your school. What points would you use to convince them that they should work together?
2. Assuming that you have formed a support group in your school, describe how members of the group can help each other.
3. You want to make use of support services in your community. Describe the challenges you could face.

Possible answers to these questions are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

Support services include different individuals, groups of people and institutions that offer advice and skills. The services can be provided in various forms. Human resources can be used to provide counselling and or training support. Reading or reference materials are another type of support.

Self-Assessment 2

The following types of support services may be available in your area:

- School support services usually focus on relevant curriculum rather than the learners' behaviour.
- Medical support services provide physical, emotional and material support.
- Community or local support groups may provide counselling, training and material support.

Self-Assessment 3

A number of factors can prevent you from accessing the support that you and your students need. A few are listed below:

- You may be unaware of the available resources.
- Background information regarding your learners may not be available.
- School administration staff and other teachers may not support you.
- Professionals may not be willing to collaborate and share information.
- If resources are available, they may be expensive.
- You may lack documentation to support your claim that assistance is required.

Unit Test

1. You could tell your colleagues at the school that if you worked together, you could:
 - share your expertise and experience,
 - help each other with the extra work involved in caring for these children,
 - draw on each person's strengths and experience, and
 - help each other reduce stress and tension.

In addition, you could highlight the importance of coming together on a regular basis to discuss the children's progress.

2. The following are possible answers, but you may have other suggestions:
 - Advise teachers to do classroom observation and record their learners' behaviour and academic performance.
 - Hold regular meetings during which feedback can be provided and discussed.
 - Help each other with teaching strategies that would meet the children's needs.
 - Support each other during times of stress. This will give everyone strength to continue with his or her work.
3. If you want to make use of support services in your community, you could face the following challenges:
 - You may lack information about the services that are available.
 - Your school administrator and other teachers may not support your desire to seek community help.
 - Funding required to obtain the service may not be available.
 - Professionals in the community may feel that you are going beyond your duties as a teacher and doing part of their job and therefore may be uncooperative.
 - The professionals in the community may lack the skills needed to help your students.
 - The parents may not want you to seek help in the community because you may reveal family matters.

UNIT 8: The Role of Parents in Helping Traumatised Children



Introduction

We have described the role of the teacher in other units of this module. In this unit, we discuss the role of parents in helping children who are victims of sexual abuse, war, crime and violence. We hope that this unit will prepare you to provide guidance to parents as to how they can support their traumatised children.

Objectives

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

1. Outline the type of information parents can provide in order to assist their children.
2. State the role played by parents in reinforcing classroom programmes at home.
3. State the role that parents can play outside the classroom.
4. Describe communication channels between parents and teachers.

Parents as Information Providers

As a teacher, you may already have shared information with parents about their children, including those who may be victims of sexual abuse, war, crime and violence. It is important for you to note that the information parents provide is vital because they have known these children throughout their lives. The information they provide may include:

- medical records of the children,
- strengths and shortcomings of the children,
- likes and dislikes of the children,
- attitudes and values of the children,
- beliefs of the children, and
- beliefs of the family.

This valuable information may help you deal with traumatised children. It is therefore important that you take advantage of it, as it may lead to more effective teaching.

Parents' Roles in Reinforcing Classroom Programmes

As a teacher, you may have requested that parents assist their children with their schoolwork at home. Parents may be able to perform the following tasks:

- check homework,
- provide resources and materials for assignments and projects,
- assist in reading,
- check progress reports,
- visit the school to discuss their children's needs,
- give positive feedback and reinforcement, and
- assist in preparing materials.

It is important to note that not all parents will be able to do the tasks outlined above. There can be a variety of reasons for this. Most parents will be more than willing to support their children to the best of their abilities. Others may, through your assistance, discover that they can help their children even though they first thought that they didn't have the skills to do it. The most important contribution parents can make is to provide encouragement and a positive attitude towards learning.

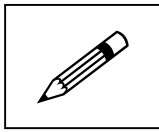
The Role of Parents Outside the Classroom

In addition to classroom assistance, you may be aware of parents' participation in other activities. It is your responsibility as a teacher to make parents see the need to be actively involved in activities outside the classroom. These activities could include:

- fundraising,
- belonging to a parent-teacher association or serving on a board of governors,
- escorting children during excursions and other official trips,
- participating in activities such as sports,
- assisting as advisors and counsellors to children, and
- providing individual or group donations of money or materials to the school.

In your community, you might find that many parents do not readily participate in these activities. This could be because they do not associate these activities with academic performance or feel that such activities are the responsibility of teachers. Whatever the case may be, your role is to initiate dialogue and communicate with parents to explain the need for

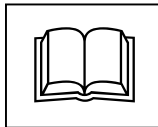
them to participate and make them see the benefits that their initiatives would yield.



Self-Assessment 1

1. What information can parents provide that will help teachers with their children?
2. How can parents support the school programme and its activities?

Possible answers to these questions are provided at the end of this unit.



Communication Channels between Parents and Teachers

You should always develop and maintain some form of two-way communication between yourself as a teacher and your students' parents. Any teacher who has no direct or indirect communication with parents will find it difficult to work with traumatised children.

It is possible that you may already have developed some means of communication with the parents with the intention of overcoming the problems facing the children. You should nevertheless note that there are several ways to establish and maintain effective two-way communication. A number of examples are outlined below.

School Visits

These could be open days on which parents can visit schools to discuss with teachers issues relating to their traumatised children. In some cases, parents could make informal visits to the school to discuss their children's progress. These visits will foster relationships between the teachers and the parents.

Written Communication

Most of the communication between teachers and parents is by means of letters. This is a very common and important form of communication because it can be used to exchange information about the learners and generally what goes on in the school.

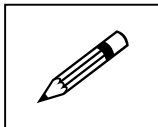
The major disadvantage of using written communication is the possible failure by parents to understand the language of communication. An alternative would be for you to use the local language or get the assistance of an interpreter if you cannot speak the parents' language. Remember that not everyone can read, write or speak the languages you are familiar with. You need to use the local language that is used and understood by your learners' parents.

Home Visits

As a teacher, your visit to the children's homes may be highly appreciated by their parents. These visits can give you the opportunity to establish close working relationships with parents, as well as see the circumstances in which the family is living. Home visits can help you understand how traumatised children may be affected by their home situations (Stakes and Hornby, 1996).

Telephone Communication

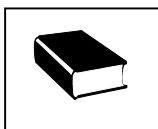
You and the parents may prefer to communicate with each other by telephones, if they are available to you and the parents. While this form of communication is also appreciated, it has some limitations. One problem is that you may have to leave your class to answer the telephone. However, you can find ways of addressing this problem. If your school has office staff, you could ask the school secretary to take messages. It is important that you call back, as parents may not be willing to share information about their children with the secretary (Stakes and Hornby, 1996).



Self-Assessment 2

As a teacher, you have an obligation to communicate with parents about the special needs of their children. Outline some of the common channels of communication you might use to contact the parents.

Possible answers to this activity are provided at the end of this unit.



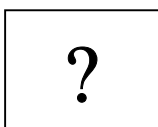
Summary

In this unit, we discussed the role played by parents in addressing problems faced by their children. The topics discussed include parents as information providers, the role of parents in supporting classroom activities, the role played by parents in activities outside the classroom and communication channels that could be used between parents and teachers. The information you have been given will help you appreciate the parents' contribution to the development of their children.



Reflection

Based on the information provided in this unit, how could you improve communication between yourself and the parents of your learners?



Unit Test

1. Outline the type of assistance parents could give you that will help their children succeed in school.
2. How can you develop a close relationship with parents?

Possible answers to these questions are provided at the end of this unit.



Suggested Answers

Self-Assessment 1

1. The answers to this question may include:
 - medical records of the children,
 - strengths and shortcomings of the children,
 - likes and dislikes of the children,
 - attitudes and values of the children,
 - beliefs of the children, and
 - cultural, religious and other beliefs of the family.
2. Parents in your community may be playing a major role in school activities outside the classroom. The following are good examples of the roles played by parents:
 - fund-raising,
 - belonging to a parent-teacher association or serving on a board of governors,
 - escorting children during excursions and other official trips,
 - participating in activities such as sports,
 - assisting as advisors and counsellors to children, and
 - providing individual or group donations of materials to the school.

Self-Assessment 2

You can use several channels of communication with parents. These may include the following:

- School visits. Parents may visit the school on formal days or informally. During such visits, parents can communicate with teachers about their children.
- Written communication. However, any notes or reports must be sent to the parents in a language that the parents can understand.
- Home visits by the teacher. The teacher will be able to see the circumstances under which the child lives and have the opportunity to establish a close working relationship with the parents.
- Telephone communication. Telephones can be used, but may not be easily accessible in the school or in some communities.

Unit Test

1. Parents can:
 - provide background information that you can use to determine the kind of support and instruction their children might require,
 - check homework,
 - provide resources and material for assignments and projects,
 - assist in reading,
 - check progress reports,
 - visit the school to discuss their children's needs,
 - provide positive feedback to their children,
 - assist in preparing materials,
 - volunteer to help in the classroom, on the playing field or during school excursions, and
 - raise funds or donate materials to the school.
2. In order to develop a close relationship with parents, you must establish contact with them, determine their cultural and religious beliefs and their views on education and ensure that they understand that you want to do the best you can to help their children learn.

Module Test

1. Describe any three circumstances that can lead children to engage in acts of crime and violence.
2. What factors may lead to low motivation in children with special educational needs?
3. Describe the characteristics of traumatised children.
4. Explain how, as a teacher, you would identify the needs of traumatised children.
5. Describe any two channels of communications between parents and teachers. Note any disadvantages to using these channels.
6. Describe the type of helpful information that parents can provide to teachers about their own children.
7. Briefly describe any two types of support service that can be provided to children who are victims of crime, sexual abuse, violence and war.
8. How could cultural, religious and social barriers affect your efforts to identify and help traumatised children?
9. Discuss ways in which teachers can work with other professionals to help traumatised children.
10. Why is it important for professionals to collaborate in working with traumatised children?

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